

POLAR PAM 2718

J & J EMPOR



FLOOD

Special Report — Dawson May 3, 1979

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The People

BY MICHAEL MacLEOD

DAWSON CITY (Staff) — The tale of Dawson City yesterday was a tale of woe.

Houses were wrenched from their foundations by flooding in the early morning. In the afternoon as the water began to recede, people walked through the streets, where the water was shallow enough, inspecting their ruined homes and exchanging weary greetings.

Where the water was deep, they canoed, rafted or boated to their homes.

They were climbing onto their roofs to get in. They were dragging open their front doors through water and mooring their boats to the front step.

The story of two victims of the flood, John and Joan Bilton, is typical.

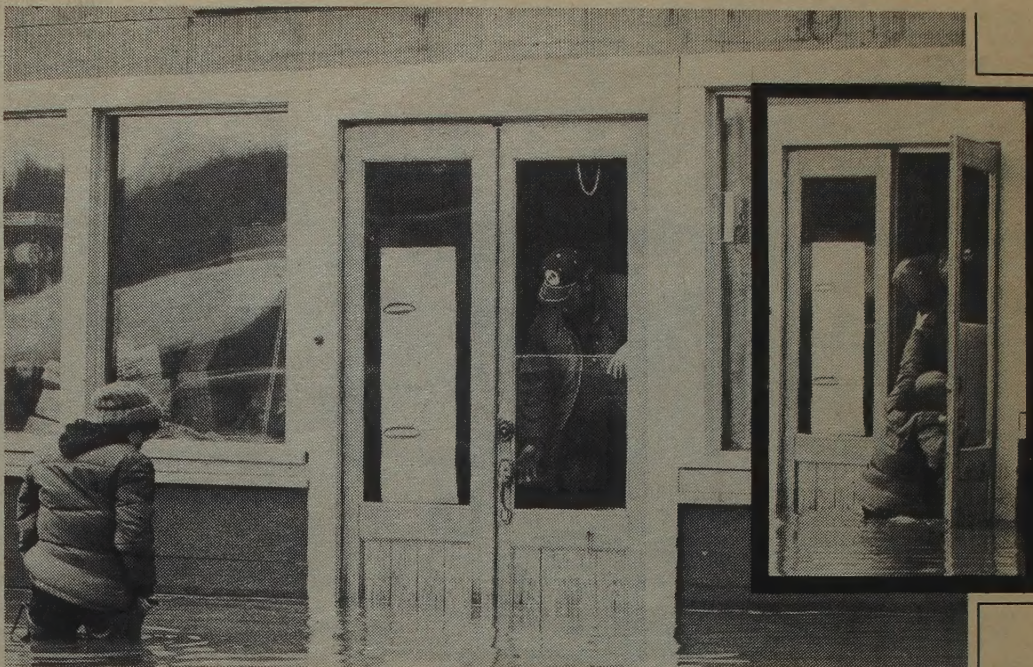
They own the J & J Emporium, a variety store on Second Avenue where the flood waters flowed deep.

"We were on the river bank watching the river come up," said Mrs. Bilton. "We only had time to run in the back door of the store and rush the kids to safety out the front door. We went to grab some torches, because somebody bellowed they needed them, and by the time we'd got them, the water was too high for us to get out. It was so deep and fast that we were frightened to try to get out."

Then John Bilton took over the story.

"Sitting here last night and seeing the water moving and not being able to get out and feeling the building moving, I tell you I was scared."

In the back of their flooded store, where the Biltons have an apartment, Mrs. Bilton moved slowly from room to room in her hip



waders surveying her ruined belongings. She began to cry.

Earlier wading through the street to her store, she was asked what she managed to get out of it ahead of the flood. "Nothing," she said, then she paused and pointed ruefully at her hip waders. They were scarcely high enough to protect her legs those last few feet to her store.

Inside, John Bilton looked around.

"Paper goods, stationary, drug stuff. . .," he named the spoiled merchandise. "I know it's going to be thousands of dollars," he said.

Bilton went around to unplug all his appliances "I haven't been into the deep freeze," he said, "no point. It's upside down."

He listed the other damage . . . TV and stereo upside down, beds soaking, counters spilled, roof split open. Yet even yes-

terday, those most affected by the flood could occasionally manage a tired smile as they greeted each other at street corners, newly created boat launches, or demolished homes. Little boys pulled floating boardwalks through the flood zone.

"There is a great spirit and a lot of people are pulling together to help," said Bilton. "But it came at a bad time, just when everything is getting ready for summer."



JOHN BILTON STARED out over the street by his store. His wife Joan was making her way through the water in hip waders. As she approached the door she slipped and John saved her from a dunking but not before her boots filled with

water. Inside, she viewed the remains of the kitchen and livingroom for the first time. She began to cry.

The People



BY MICHAEL MacLEOD

DAWSON (Staff) — Five hundred to six hundred persons, about one-half the population of this flood-stricken community, were estimated homeless last night as Dawson City prepared for its first whole night since the flooding began.

Most of the homeless took shelter with friends and neighbours in houses in high parts of the city, which were untouched by the flood. Emergency workers slept overnight in their headquarters above the post office and at Robert Service School.

RCMP said they would patrol the flood zone through the night to guard against looting.

Leo Bourassa, Emergency Measures Organization Coordinator, said further flooding appeared unlikely. Ice that caused the flooding early Wednesday had moved at least 70 miles downriver, he said.

The last of four relief planes reaching here after 2 p.m. from Whitehorse brought foam rubber sleeping mats and baby food. More relief flights are scheduled for today.

EMO officials warned residents against walking through the flood water, which was still four to five feet deep in places. Yvan Lemieux, Superintendent of Public Works, warned that persons walking in the muddy water could fall down uncovered manholes into the sewer system, as a CBC reporter did yesterday afternoon.

For many residents here, the sleep last night would be their first in 36 hours. Few slept Wednesday night when the Yukon River began to rise and finally burst through the dike surrounding the city at midnight.

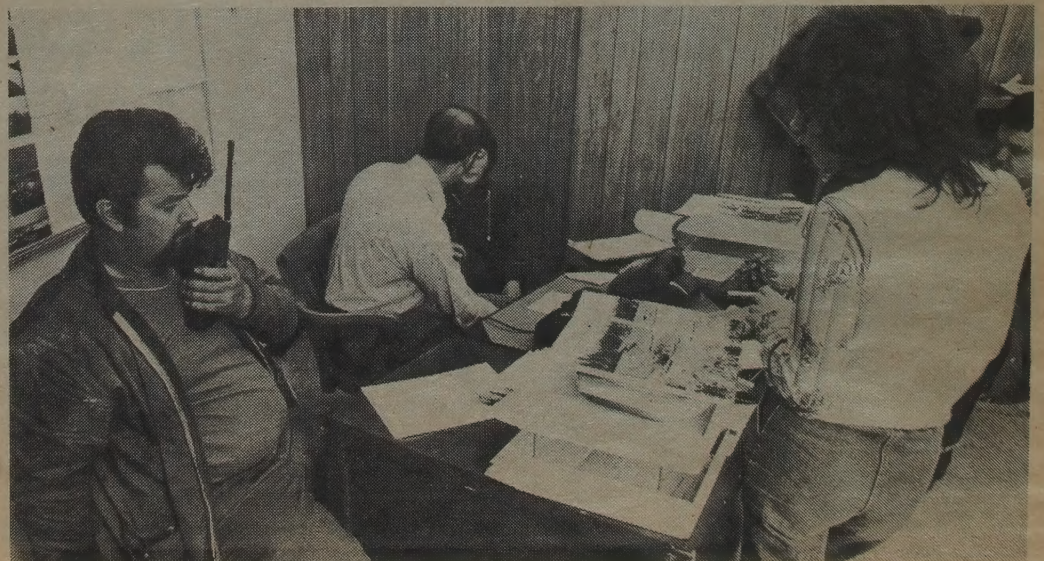


THE BOARDWALKS of Dawson disappeared, surfacing around the city; residents checked damage in their houses through any entrance available; Yvan Lemieux, Superintendent of Public Works, keeps in radio contact with emergency workers.

WHITEHORSE — Federal Liberal candidate Allen Lueck has contacted the Minister of Northern Affairs with a plea for immediate funding for victims of Wednesday night's devastating flood in Dawson City.

The area, declared a disaster zone by Commissioner Ione Christensen, was inundated by more than four metres of water when spring break-up ice jams clogged the Yukon River.

Lueck says the Minister's office has promised to get to work on the request immediately. Source of funds and emergency assistance do exist, and will be sought out as soon as possible, said a spokesman for the Minister's office.



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The Damage

BY MICHAEL MacLEOD

DAWSON CITY (Staff) — Volunteers opened a food dispensary in the school here about 11 a.m. yesterday, and began selling eggs, bread, fuel, corn, beans, boots, blankets and cooking utensils, as fast as they were unloaded from planes from Whitehorse.

Haggard-looking men, women and children received the goods across tables stretched in line over the gymnasium floor. "We've been up since 8 a.m. yesterday," said one of the volunteers last night.

Joan Berriman, another volunteer, swam out of her house when the flood struck.

"I lie down and I think about it, and I shake

all over again," she said. She turned away to serve a lady and two children. "What would you like," she asked.

"I need two mattresses," said the lady.

"Mattresses are coming in on the next plane."

On one of the tables, Mike Senisuk sat eating salmon from a can.

"I was sleeping in bed," he said. "I heard a noise outside. I jump out of my bed, and try to open the window. But something is blocking it. So I take a propane bottle and break out the window. I stepped out in the porch and I screamed and a neighbour got a boat so he came and picked me up."

Along the impromptu food counters vol-

unteers gave out food and clothes free . . . dry goods on the strength of a signature, and blankets on loan.

Bread, eggs, coffee, tea and juice were in most demand. The dispensary has ordered cigarettes from Whitehorse for today.

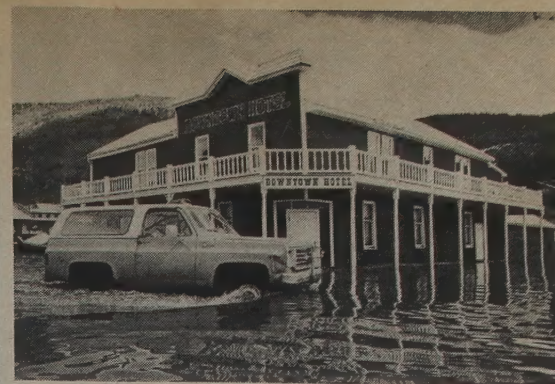
Three food flights came in yesterday. If the Yukon's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Dan Dimitroff, declares cans of food that were submerged in the flooded Flora Dora grocery safe, then the flights from Whitehorse may be called off today.

Meanwhile, school children have been given the day off, and the school will continue to be used as a refuge, shelter and food dispensary.



AN AERIAL VIEW of Dawson shows the destruction wrought by the floodwaters. Some kids took advantage of their day off from school to get a first-hand look at the changed face of their community. A boat tour of the city revealed

damage to some of the buildings that have been preserved as historic sites. (Staff Photos by Ken Faught)



WHITEHORSE (Staff) — The Canadian Red Cross Society, Salvation Army, the Territorial government and other agencies appeal to the Whitehorse public to assist the people in Dawson City.

The immediate need is for spring type clothing, and footwear, (all sizes for adults and children).

Clothing should be clean and wearable and donors are asked to indicate sizes if possible.

The drop off centre is at the coffee house door of the Salvation Army at 4th and Black Street.

For further information, contact Captain Wilson of the Salvation Army at 668-2327 or 667-6982; Max Neave of the Canadian Red Cross at 667-5670 or 667-4591, or the territorial government at 667-5674.

Once items have been sorted, they will be flown to Dawson City on the first available flight.



The Damage



The Damage



WHITEHORSE (Staff) — Three Kelly Douglas employees, members of Local 31 of the Teamsters Union, returned to work at the warehouse Thursday, loading up food supplies to be sent to flooded Dawson City.

Teamsters' business representative, Ken Kirby said yesterday that the union was allowing these three of the company's striking workers to return to work to help Dawson residents in the emergency situation. Following discussions with Kelly Douglas management early yesterday morning, Kirby said the three would be permitted to continue working at the warehouse for as long as the emergency continues.

All staple food items were being flown to Dawson City by Trans North Turbo Air and Transport Canada aircraft throughout the day yesterday.

Bill Dunlop, Kelly Douglas assistant warehouse manager said workers made five trips from the warehouse to the airport where they loaded the supplies onto the waiting planes. He said enough food has been shipped up to last Dawson residents for a week.

The workers are being paid by Kelly Douglas.

As soon as Dawson City is no longer in a state of emergency, the three workers will return to picket duty.



What's ahead for Dawson?

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for daily updates.



Stories
Michael MacLeod

Photographs
Ken Faught

The Rescue



THREE FOOD FLIGHTS from Whitehorse arrived in Dawson Thursday afternoon, and supplies were taken to Robert Service School, which is being used as a refuge, shelter and food dispensary. A drop-off centre for emergency supplies has been established at the Salvation Army, at Forth Avenue and Black Street,

Whitehorse, to assist Dawson residents. Northern Times reporter Michael MacLeod arrived in Dawson Thursday morning and is staying through the weekend to provide more update coverage of the flood in Monday's Times.